



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SOME PROBLEMS OF THE AGE.

BY THE VERY REV. F. W. FARRAR, DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

OUR daily familiarity with the conditions of things around us often hinders our due apprehension of them. Yet it should certainly be our earnest endeavor to amend to the utmost of our power all existent evils, and out of that duty to posterity by which all true men are influenced, to avert, so far as we may, the perils which menace the not distant future. Let us then glance briefly at some of those problems of the close of this nineteenth century, which it is blindness to ignore, and madness not to appreciate in their full significance.

Among those problems and perils are :

I. The enormous growth of stupendous fortunes, without any effectual diminution of those malarious marshes of struggling poverty, and of the waste places fertile in sorrow, which the French describe under the general name of "*La Misère*." When zones of plethoric riches, of selfish luxury, of materializing egotism, are conterminous with zones of squalid wretchedness and practical heathendom, such juxtaposition, as a wise Bishop has warned us, tends to produce cyclones. In almost all the great capitals of the world you have fashionable churches and millionaire congregations, and, close beside them, masses of torn, lost, ragged, bewildered, neglected sheep in the wilderness without a shepherd. Two nations are placed side by side ; one nation lives in gorgeous palaces, drives in splendid equipages, indulges in an endless round of banquets and every form of material and æsthetic self-indulgence. It breathes perfumed air, is clothed in purple and fine linen, and fares sumptuously every day. There are splendid patches and crimson embroideries on the robe of our civilization, but how seamy and ragged are the edges of that robe ! Turn from the priceless superfluities of the rich quarters—from the

fashionable worship and the æsthetic religionism—to streets in which there is not one decent house or one decent woman, the homes of dim pauper generations in which myriads pass their miserable lives. Even physically the air is foul and loaded with pestilence : but morally—who slew all these ? Who is responsible for these lounging, loafing, hulking men—brutes more than men ? for these dehumanized women ?

“ Oh let it not be named for womanhood :
Think we had mothers ! ”

And the children ? Ah ! that is the deepest horror of it all ! There are children who, at four years old, have learned to echo the foul language of their parents, and are familiar with their infamies—wretched children, half-sized, half-fed, without health, without home, without hope ; children with stunted, shrunk limbs ; with the slum-look on their poor, wizened faces, and many of them maimed, or crippled, or full of disease ; children who never heard the name of God but to give emphasis to a curse, or to gain credence for a lie. Then look at the girls—coarse, flaunting, slatternly—with the wicked, leering expression on their bold and brazen features, many of them living on the wages of vice ! Who is responsible for this blackness of great darkness ? Who is responsible for the filthy lanes and reeking pauper-tenements, places horrible to live in, and yet more horrible to die in, foul with oaths, fights, blasphemies, gin, and verminiferous dirt ? Two master fiends rage and riot among them—the fiend of drink, enthroned in glaring gin-palaces, whose enormously wealthy owners are exalted to the House of Peers for kindling the ghastly fires in which so many myriads of human moths scorch themselves into shrivelling agony ; and the fiend of impurity, filling the souls and bodies of men and women with leprosy, and producing the blighted offspring who in their turn shall be the retributive scourge of the civilization of which they have been the helpless victims.

II. Consider, secondly, the abnormal growth of great cities. It is no mere external phenomenon.

In almost all nations, by a slow and hardly noticed social revolution, the old sweet country life is being merged into the struggling life of towns—a life which has been called “ the grave of the physique of our race,” which is also, too often, the grave of its morality.

We might take, by way of example, New York, or Paris, or Berlin, or Vienna, or Rome; but take London as one colossal specimen. When clergymen talk or preach about the evils of cities, men of the world shrug their shoulders with cynical apathy, and set it down as professional declamation. Let me then quote the testimony of wise and eminent laymen, to whom the callousness of familiarity has not made London cease to be an appalling phenomenon.

Here is the impression which the world's capital made on the poet-critic of genius, Heinrich Heine :

"This stern reality of things, this colossal uniformity, this machine-like movement, this sour visage worn by joy itself, this high pressure of life, weighs down the fancy, and rends the heart asunder."

"What a wild, wondrous, chaotic den of discord it is!" said Thomas Carlyle, when first he came to London. "I am often woe and awestruck to wander along its crowded streets, and hear the roaring torrent of animals, and carriages, and horses, and men, all rushing they know not whence, they know not whither."

"One thing about London impresses me," said J. Russell Lowell, "above any other sound I have ever heard. It is the low, unceasing hum one hears in the air. When I hear it, I almost feel as if I were listening to the roaring loom of time."

I will quote but one or two more striking testimonies out of many. Consider this overwhelming condemnation of the phenomena of city life by the late Professor Huxley. Describing an East End parish, in which he had lived for some years, he said :

"Over and above the physical misery, the impression has never died out of my mind of the supernatural and entirely astonishing deadness and dullness of these poor people. Over that parish Dante's inscription, '*Leave hope behind, all those who enter here,*' might have been written. There was no amusement to diversify the dull round of life, except the public house; there was nothing to remind the people of anything in the whole universe, beyond their miserable toil, rewarded by slow starvation. In my experience of all kinds of savages all over the world I found nothing worse, nothing more degraded, nothing more helpless, nothing so intolerably dull and miserable, as the life I had left behind me in the East End of London. Nothing would please me more than to contribute to the bettering of that state of things, *which, unless wise and benevolent men take it in hand, will tend to become worse and worse, and to create something worse than savagery—a great Serbonian bog, which in the long run will swallow up the surface crust of civilization.*"

Here again is the impression left by London on two such emi-

nent living observers as Lord Rosebery and Mr. Chauncey Depew:

"I am always haunted," says Lord Rosebery, "by the awfulness of London; of the great appalling effect of these millions, cast down, as it would appear, by hazard, on the banks of this noble stream, working each in their own groove, and their own cell, without heeding each other, without having the slightest idea how the other lives—the heedless casualty of unnumbered thousands of men. Cobbett called London 'a wen.' If it was a wen *then*, what is it now but a tumor, sucking into its great system half the life and the blood of the rural districts?"

"One Sunday," said Mr. Chauncey Depew, "I traversed the White-chapel district, and saw a sight it is impossible to see anywhere else in the world. Such poverty, such misery, such wretchedness, such a seething furnace of ignorance, and all the attendants upon it, I never saw before, and never expect to see again. I felt that that great city, with its magnificent palaces, with every evidence, in part of it, of the greatest wealth and the largest luxury, *rests upon a volcano, which only needs the force of civilization to loosen upon it, to produce a catastrophe which would shock the world.*"

Once more consider the terrible, but perfectly accurate, lines of Lord Tennyson :

"Is it well that, while we range with Science, glorying in the time,
City children soak and blacken, soul and sense, in city slime?
There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousands on the street.
There the master scrimps the haggard seamstress of her daily bread,
There a single crowded attic holds the living and the dead;
There the smouldering fire of fever creeps along the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor."

III. Thirdly, is there nothing to cause anxiety in the huge unparalleled *growth of population*? It has so greatly alarmed France that there a large family is a rare exception, and there in consequence the population is diminishing. In India, the rapid increase of population has already caused the depression of vast masses of the people into almost chronic starvation. In England, densely overcrowded England, the births exceed the deaths by hundreds a day, and what shall we do in the end thereof? Even now there is severe and almost overwhelming competition. Advertise that you want a clerk on £100 a year, who will have to work any number of hours a day, and you will get many scores of eager and anxious applicants. Already in England the depression has reached whole classes—the *tenant farmers*, of whom many are on the verge of bankruptcy; the smaller *shopkeepers* who suffer from over-competition, and the inevitably changing conditions of trade; the *clerks*, whose little-skilled employment

is rendered less valuable by the thousands who crowd their ranks in the belief that clerkship is more respectable than mechanical labor; the *clergy*, of whom large numbers, suffering from the agricultural depression, are entangled in painful difficulties; the *working-classes*—who are indeed hardly a class, but are the backbone of the nation—whose employment not only becomes more and more irregular and uncertain, but many of whom are dispossessed by foreigners, who can work longer, are better trained, and can live on less. Meanwhile the increase of population which is going on is mainly the increase of the unfit; it is 10 per cent. more rapid in the slums than in the squares, and its fermenting and irrepressible rapidity—which has multiplied the inhabitants of England more in this fragment of a century than it had been multiplied in eight centuries after the Norman conquest—is largely due to the curse of disgracefully early marriages between half-developed boys and girls who enter on the estate of matrimony “within half a crown of destitution.” Add to all our other difficulties the fact that our whole industrial system may, at no distant date, be endangered by tremendous hurricanes of disturbance, and if, at any time, the diminished profits of the capitalist should end in glutted markets, in paralyzing strikes, in commercial stagnation, in the alienation to foreign and especially to Eastern lands of many of our most important trades—if, instead of tens of thousands, we should soon have hundreds of thousands of the unemployed upon our hands, must it not be admitted that very dark days may be within measurable distance of our present conditions of society?

IV. The dangerous elements to which I have alluded tend ever to increase and multiply. It might have been thought that national misgiving is inconsistent with the growth—or rather with the advance by leaps and bounds—of natural resources. The increase of our income has, indeed, been enormous—greater, as Mr. Gladstone has said, from 1800 to 1850 than from the days of Julius Cæsar to 1800, and from 1850 to 1880 than from 1800 to 1850—so that now our annual income is asserted to be quite £1,300,000,000 a year, and our national investments are calculated at £200,000,000 a year. Yet though the actual laborers are ever being multiplied, “the fund available for them becomes a constantly decreasing factor of the national wealth”; and while the rich are growing richer great masses of the poor are growing

relatively poorer, so that in large parts of England a considerable fraction of the population is living continually on the dim borderland of pauperism.

In ancient Rome such contrasts of

“Wealth a monster gorged
Mid starving populations”

were deemed ominous. In ancient cities there were the dark shadows always flung by a brilliant civilization—there were the gladiators, and the slaves—but in modern cities too there is “a certain mass of crushed and unreclaimed humanity, the canker that feeds on the exuberance of its luxury, and perforates it with misery and decadence.” “There is,” said Mr. J. Russell Lowell, “a poison in the sores of Lazarus, against which Dives has no antidote.”

“Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.”

VI. And it must, I fear, be sorrowfully admitted that one bad omen of these days is the *deficiency of adequate charity*. In London the hospitals are the most popular of all the charities; and yet in that wealthiest city in the world there is scarcely one of the hospitals which is not burdened with deficits, and compelled to issue despairing appeals. The sum expended in our charities is loudly vaunted and sounds large, but the reality of charity is tested not by the *quantum* but by the *ex quanto*. On what is called “Hospital Sunday,” in every church of every religious denomination, London is appealed to in hundreds of earnest and even impassioned sermons. What is the result? Only from £40,000 to £50,000! and the next day you read that £76,000 or £100,000 has been emulously poured out by a handful of rich people at Christie’s, to purchase buhl, or bric-à-brac, or Queen Anne plate, or Louis Quatorze furniture, and that more has been bidden for a piece of ormolu or a gold snuffbox, or three Sèvres vases than is contributed by several of our wealthiest congregations. Our much belauded charities are, when nationally estimated, a proof of our meanness, not a monument of our munificence.

Yet an experienced civil engineer warns us that “we are on the verge of a revolution in thought and practice, and the only way to make this revolution harmless, and even beneficial, is to give, freely and betimes, that which else will be taken later on.”

VII. These things being so, *the growth of democracy*, the power of the workingmen, the demands of the Socialists and of the independent labor party, are not without a sinister significance. Pope Leo XIII. would not have written his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* if he had not been aware of the extent to which labor questions are coming to the front. We cannot put our ears to the ground and listen, without hearing the low murmur of the swelling tide of the people. "I see them rising to their feet," says the eloquent Bishop of Derry, "the greatest host that time has ever known, and hear the murmur of millions speaking to millions across the sea in many languages. What there is in the gospel to rectify the relations of human life, to elevate the selfishness of capital and chasten the selfishness of labor, to carry to the homes improvement in the present and hope for the future, that will find eager listeners. But to the men of the near future religion will appear a barren and worthless stem unless it be taught to clothe itself with the blossom of worship, and to bear the fruits of human love." But if that be so, it is sad to observe how angry and how contemptuous is the attitude toward the Church and the churches among the artisans and laborers in many centres of commercial and agricultural industry.

Now, amid all these grave conditions, is there any hope? We know, and many years ago Mr. Gladstone eloquently reminded us, that: "It is against the ordinance of Providence, it is against the interests of man, that immediate reparation should be possible when long-continued evils had been at work; for one of the strongest safeguards against misdoing would be removed, if at any moment the consequence of misdoing could be repaired." But if there be no hope of an immediate Utopia, is there no hope of gradual amelioration?

Yes! there is, if nations remain true to the lessons of the Gospel. It is the *only* gospel for the many and for the poor. They can look to no other source of help, hope, or comfort. Science has no gospel for them, and can point them to nothing but vast, mysterious, inexorable laws "which have no ear to hear, no heart to pity, and no arm to save." Political economy has no gospel for them, but the cruel demonstration that the weak must go to the wall, and that those who stumble in the race can only be trampled pitilessly down under the hoof of advancing

generations. Socialism has no gospel for them, but only the false hopes held out by impossible theories, which, if even for a time they were carried out by anarchic violence, would only plunge mankind into more unutterable ruin. But true religion *can* create convictions which will inspire them with courage, energy, and hope; which by the extinction of vice and drunkenness, will give them even amid poverty and struggle, a power to raise themselves into the true self-respect of those who have the dignity of God's image upon them, and the sign of their redemption visibly marked upon their foreheads.

If then another characteristic of this age be *the decay of faith*, it is the worst omen of all. Is there this decay of faith? It is at least a perilous sign that, in many Christian countries, thousands choose atheists, and socialists, and men of no religion, and men of religions utterly hostile to their own, to represent them in their Congresses and Parliaments; that not ten per cent. of the working classes go to church or receive the eucharist; that in France, Spain and Italy Roman Catholicism—on the testimony of Roman Catholics themselves—has so completely lost all hold on the manhood of the Continent that millions of nominal Roman Catholics do not even pretend to follow out the most elementary external rules and requirements of their religion; that among all English-speaking races the word Agnosticism—though a word of yesterday—is descriptive of a widespread mental phenomenon; that leading newspapers discuss such questions as “whether they have not been, on the whole, a curse to the world?” that the “Catechism” of Free Thinkers is widely spread among our working classes; that powerful governments have erased from their statute books the name of God.

Some readers may perhaps ask whether it is the object of this paper to point to pessimistic conclusions. I answer by no means. “Our healing,” says Mr. Lowell, “is not in the storm or in the whirlwind; it is not in monarchies or aristocracies, or democracies, but will be revealed by the still small voice that speaks to the conscience and the heart, prompting us to wider and wider humanity.” The regeneration of society has always come from individuals; never from committees. It will not be achieved, it never has been achieved by legislation. It cannot possibly be brought about by violence. Verbal orthodoxy is absolutely powerless to accomplish reformatations. Ceremonial religionism may co-

exist and has often co-existed with the most detestable enormities. But let each true Christian man live up to his profession, let him walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, let him boldly rebuke vice and be ready patiently to suffer for the truth's sake, and then that salt of sincerity has *not* lost its savor, and will be adequate for the regeneration of the world. It is the duty of every one of us, to the best of our power, to claim and to reclaim ; to build upon the foundations, or if that has become impossible, to rebuild among the ruins ; to break up the fallow-ground, and make the old waste places blossom as the rose. Then shall we be called "the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in." We are called upon neither to groan, nor to despond, but to work. When Lord Reay breathed the somewhat vapid wish, "Well, God mend all." "*Nay!*" answered Sir David Ramsay, "*Nay, Donald, but we must help Him to mend it.*"

Let us lay it down as an unalterable law that God never does for man, what man can and ought to do for himself. We have seen for generations that

"God can never make man's best,
Without best men to help Him."

But when once we rouse ourselves to genuine Altruism, there is no knowing what even the humblest may not accomplish. "A common slave" says the great tragedy,

"A common slave—you know him well by sight—
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
Like twenty torches joined : and yet his hand,
Not sensible of fire, remained unscorched."

There is not one of us so humble that we may not become like that poor slave. There is no hand, which if bravely uplifted to God in the service of men amid the dark world and its doing faith, may not burn in testimony "like twenty torches joined"—illuminating, strengthening, warning, revivifying, hastening the final dominance of that kingdom which even now is, and shall be more and more.

F. W. FARRAR.